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FOR UNDER SECRETARY BURNS FROM AMBASSADOR BRADTKE
EUR FOR A/S FRIED AND DAS DICARLO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/16/2017

TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM HR BK

SUBJECT: CARDINAL MCCARRICK'S VISIT TO CROATIA

Classified By: Ambassador Robert A. Bradtke for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Cardinal McCarrick's very successful visit to Zagreb sent a strong message of continued United States engagement on Bosnia and reassured Croatian leaders that the U.S. is working with the Bosnian Croats as we seek move ahead on constitutional and police reform.

¶2. (SBU) In spite of the short notice of the visit and absence of President Mesic and Prime Minister Sanader, who were both on vacation on the coast, Mesic and Sanader signaled the importance they attached to the his visit by despatching their two senior, trusted advisors, Budimir Loncar and Hido Biscevic, to meet with the Cardinal. Sanader also spoke by phone with the Cardinal during a luncheon with Biscevic at my residence, and the Cardinal met with Deputy Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor.

¶3. (C) We will report the Cardinal's meetings in greater detail, but the basic message from the Croatians was concern that as Croatia moves towards membership in NATO and the EU, and Bosnia suffers from a dysfunctional government and ethnic tensions, Bosnian Croats will vote with their feet and leave Bosnia for a better future in Croatia. This would leave an inherently unstable Bosnia, divided between Serbs and Bosniaks. As Biscevic put it, Bosnia is a three legged stool) Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats) and without all three legs, it cannot stand.

¶4. (C) The other key points emphasized by the Cardinal, Croatian interlocutors were: the need for greater engagement with Cardinal Puljic, as difficult as he can be; the importance of overcoming the personality-driven divisions among the Croatian political parties in Bosnia; and, the danger of spillover into Bosnia of instability in Kosovo. All of the Croatians recognized that the problems of the Bosnian Croats were not easily solved, and that while Croatia wanted to help, the Bosnian Croats) as Loncar put it) "need to look to Sarajevo, not Zagreb."

¶5. (SBU) In his conversations with me and the Croatians, Cardinal McCarrick offered a realistic view of what his trip might accomplish. The visit, he hoped, would help give the Bosnian Croats a greater sense that their concerns were being taken into account, particularly by the United States. The visit might also help promote several small confidence building steps, such as progress on permission for the building of new churches, which might bring about a more constructive attitude by Cardinal Puljic.

¶6. (SBU) Beyond this visit, Cardinal McCarrick and I discussed how we might follow up. He intends to be in touch with Croatian Ambassador Jurica in Washington to brief him on

the trip, and he wants to report to Under Secretary Burns. I urged the Cardinal to consider a return visit at an appropriate time to assess progress. I would also recommend that after being briefed by the Cardinal, Under Secretary Burns send a letter to Prime Minister Sanader, stressing that the U.S. wants to continue our dialogue with Croatia on Bosnia's future.

BRADTKE